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SDDVA Secretary Schneider's April Column – Military Child Month: Honoring the Quiet Strength Behind the Uniform

Each April, we observe the Month of the Military Child — a time to honor the sons and daughters of those who serve. Their strength reminds us that service to our nation extends beyond those in uniform. In South Dakota and across the country, military children exemplify resilience, courage, and patriotism long before they are old enough to wear the uniform themselves. This year, Purple Up! Day will be recognized on April 15.

Military children grow up learning lessons that many adults take a lifetime to master. They adapt during deployments, face frequent moves, navigate new schools, and endure holidays marked by an empty chair at the table. Yet, through these challenges, they continue to thrive with quiet determination and pride. They are vital members of the military community whose sacrifices often go unseen but are no less profound.

As Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA), I view Military Child Month as more than a recognition—it is an expression of gratitude. These young people serve in their own right. Their contributions may not be measured in medals or ceremonies, but they deserve our deepest respect. Behind many service members and veterans stands a child who learned patience, perseverance, and sacrifice at an early age.

Military children benefit from schools, neighbors, coaches, and communities that recognize their experiences and celebrate their strength. The greatest gift we can offer is acknowledgment. Seeing them, encouraging them, and reminding them that their sacrifices matter. When we honor military children, we honor the full family commitment behind military service and invest in the next generation of leaders and citizens.

This April, I encourage all South Dakotans to recognize the courage and resilience of our military children. Wear purple, extend encouragement, and support military families in your community.

When we honor military children, we honor the quiet strength that sustains our armed forces and veterans. May each of these young people know they are seen, valued, and deeply appreciated.

April also brings other important military observances:

- April 5: Gold Star Spouses Day
- April 9: National Former POW Recognition Day
- April 14: Air Force Reserve Birthday
- April 15: Purple Up! Day
- April 23: Army Reserve Birthday

These dates remind us that service impacts entire families and communities. They also invite us to pause, remember, and recommit to supporting those who carry the weight of service.

April is set to be a busy month for the SDDVA. We warmly invite veterans, their families, and community partners to participate in a series of events designed to foster connection and support.

- Coffee and Camaraderie:
 - April 7: McIntosh Town Hall, McIntosh, 11:00 a.m. (MT)
 - April 9: Rosalie's Restaurant Bakery & Lounge, Sisseton, 11:00 a.m. (CT)
 - April 13: American Legion Post #22, Rapid City, 4:30 p.m. (MT)
- April 11: Women Veterans & Military Spouses Wellness Retreat – Savior's Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, 9:00 a.m. (CT)
- C/TVSO Spring Mini Conferences:
 - April 14: Rapid City
 - April 15: Pierre
 - April 16: Sioux Falls

Jeremiah J. Schneider, Secretary
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